

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

PUBLIC HEARING

On

SUFFOLK COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE BUDGET

JULY 31, 2006

Minutes taken by:

Lucia Braaten, Court Stenographer

Hauppauge, New York

[THE HEARING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 1:30 P.M.]

LEG. HORSLEY:

All righty. Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to the public hearing on the Suffolk County Community College, dated July 31st, 2006. May we all stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

(Salutation)

I see we're all amongst friends here. Again, this is the second public hearing for the Suffolk County Community College budget, 2006•2007. The first was held at the June 27th General Meeting in Riverhead. Do I have •• I have three cards. Are there any others? Anyone else like to be heard? All right. Why don't we start with that. Mr. Charles Stein, the eminent Charles Stein, please.

MR. STEIN:

Thank you. Thank you for this opportunity to address the Suffolk County Community College recommended Operating Budget for 2006•2007. The following is a synopsis of that Operating Budget, as recommended by the County Executive.

There is a 2% increase in County support. It includes the proceeds of a tuition increase at the \$110 per year level for full•time resident students. It assumes that we will end the current year with a balance of about 2 million

dollars. The College believes this is overstated by about 500,000. Provisions have been made for collective bargaining. Positions requested by the College were only included to the extent that they were financially supported by outside revenue.

The specific net expenditure or reductions to the College request is about \$354,000 as follows: Reductions in equipment of about \$379,000. Reductions in supplies of about \$279,000. Reductions in contractual expenses of about 409,000, which includes a reduction in our energy appropriation of almost 345,000. And there was an increase in employee benefits of about \$200,000 to account for the results of collective bargaining. There was also a \$40,000 reduction in the amount that will be paid to the College for the use of the space occupied by the Police Academy.

While we appreciate the \$727,000 of additional County support provided by the Executive's 2% increase, it's important to note that the College believes that the reductions just noted above need to be restored. Our request was carefully considered and significant restraint was incorporated by the College Administration and the Board of Trustees. The negative impact of the reductions noted above will be significant. The Budget Review Office of the Legislature has released its analysis of the Executive's recommended budget. As usual, the analysis has been done in a very professional manner.

We look forward to further discussion of the College's budget and BRO's recommendations at the meeting of the Economic Development, Higher Education and Energy Committee on August 2nd. Thank you for your time.

LEG. HORSLEY:

All right. Thank you very much, Mr. Stein. May I just ask a quick on that? You said that you're going to •• you're anticipating to conclude the 2006 •2007 budget with, I think you said, a 2 million dollar ••

MR. STEIN:

The County Executive projects it about 2 million.

LEG. HORSLEY:

That was the County Executive's.

MR. STEIN:

Yeah.

LEG. HORSLEY:

And you anticipate that it would be \$500,000 less?

MR. STEIN:

Yeah. We're going to be around 1.5 million and ••

LEG. HORSLEY:

And so the 1.5 million will be then •• if that is the case, would be added to what, the reserve fund?

MR. STEIN:

No. As a matter of fact, that's being utilized in the '06•'07 budget. In other words, it carries over to the '06•'07 budget.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Okay. I was just curious on that. Thank you very much, Mr. Stein. I'd like to now call on Dr. Shirley Pippins.

DR. PIPPINS:

Good afternoon. I must begin by again thanking you, the members of the Suffolk County Legislature, for your continued support. Our major goal for the College continues to be creating and supporting the quality workforce needed to make Suffolk County more economically competitive and, therefore, less vulnerable to the outsourcing of jobs and the loss of our talented young people and families. With your support, we are doing just that. At the same time, we are expanding the range and quality of educational opportunities for all of our citizens.

I also wish to thank the Budget Review Office for its usual thorough and comprehensive analysis. We believe our requested budget is fiscally prudent, holds the line on mission•crucial expenses, allows the College to invest

strategically, reflects cost savings strategies, and positions the College to continue its pursuit of excellence, all while addressing major Suffolk County priorities. At the same time, we are limiting the tuition increase to the cost of living.

The BRO report submit •• I'm sorry. The BRO report supports many of the major points made by the College. Specifically, the report acknowledges the need for replacement furniture and vehicles, plant maintenance equipment, online information services, advertising for Sayville and Riverhead, energy and benefits. The report highlights the decline in percent of County support and the corresponding increase in the percent of student costs.

The report also documents that in this era of rapidly changing technology, expenditures for the state•of•the•art equipment necessary to create and support a quality workforce are actually declining, down from \$160 per FTE in 2002•2003 to \$102 per FTE in 2005•2006. The BRO report cites equipment expenditures of \$99 per FTE in the recommended budget, and recommends an additional \$370,000 for replacement of original furniture in the Huntington Library on the Ammerman Campus, as well as replacement vehicles and equipment. Overall, the BRO report estimates the essential additions to the County Executive's recommended budget will require an increase of approximately \$874,050, about 2.37%.

We understand the Legislature's fiscal concerns and will cooperate with the Legislature's Community College Budget Working Group to develop budget amendment resolutions, allowing us to operate effectively within the 4% cap. I see smiles up there, very good.

While the BRO recommends the approval of only two facilities positions, I believe a strong case can be made for further prioritized positions, all of which support our continuous efforts towards organizational effectiveness and

efficiency. The positions fall into three categories, those tied to stewardship of existing facilities, those essential to the safety and security of students in our new programs and facilities, and positions essential to the support of new initiatives, new initiatives which respond to significant community needs and are receiving significant support from outside sources. Specific examples include the Professional Assistant and Clerk Typist with the new Riverhead Culinary Art Center. These positions must be filled by June 2007 to prepare for a successful Fall.

The requested security positions are another excellent example. During the past two years, we have worked with our Human Resources Department and the County Personnel Office to overcome historic barriers to keeping these positions filled. These positions are essential to the safety and security of students at our downtown centers, both the existing Sayville Center and the proposed Riverhead facility.

The requested counselor position supports the continued expansion of our innovative and nationally recognized College Success Program. This program, which is growing rapidly, has significant support from parents and is producing impressive results with our most challenged students. These students, representing about 40% of our new students, come to us with significant developmental needs. With your support, this pilot program is making a difference. There is an imperative to move forward with this important initiative. In fact, just today I received an E•mail from a student who entered the College Success Program in the Summer of 2004 with significant developmental needs. She graduated in two years and qualified for Phi Theta Cap pa, our Honor Society, and is a recipient, potential recipient of a scholarship at Long Island University.

Your support continues to make a difference in the range of educational opportunities available to our citizens and the quality of the workforce we can

develop and support. We are available to meet with the Legislature's Community College Budget Work Group any time between now and Thursday to meet the filing deadline for budget amendments.

Again, I appreciate your continued support, and I look forward to working with you in the future. With your assistance, we are helping to make Suffolk County a better place to live and work. Thank you.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Thank you very much, Dr. Pippins. And I, too, agree that we •• it is our mission to give the most cost effective, but most •• support our most important elements, that would be our Suffolk County Community College.

I just wanted to note that I've been listening to your commercials, maybe because I wasn't listening last year, but suddenly they're now on my mind and I hear them. They're very good, and I wish you luck with them. I hope that •• could you just give me a little enlightenment on what the enrollment looks like for this •• for this Fall?

DR. PIPPINS:

It's very early, so any projections I gave you at this point might be dangerous, but they're looking positive.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Dangerous, okay.

DR. PIPPINS:

Right. We don't •• we won't know until we really get very close to census date.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Okay.

DR. PIPPINS:

But you can thank Vice President Araneo, who's in the audience, for our wonderful commercials, so ••

LEG. HORSLEY:

For the commercials. Well, congratulations. Are they more so than last year, or just now that I'm tuned in?

MS. ARANEO:

No. It's actually a primary time for us to be advertising, because a lot of decision•making is taking place during this period, so it's timed.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Excellent. Okay. Well, congratulations. All right. Again, thank you very much, Dr. Pippins, and your comments are always well thought. George Gatta, Suffolk County Community College.

MR. GATTA:

Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the Executive's recommended budget. And, also, I'd like to echo

V.P. Stein's comments to thank BRO for their very thorough •• and Dr. Pippins' comments, very thorough and very fair review of the College budget.

Following Dr. Pippins and V.P. Stein's testimony, I'd like to focus really on just five areas, some of which underscores what has already been presented, but I feel it's important. One is enhanced workforce development programs. The second is expanded partnerships with major industries and employers. Third would be our efforts to increase outside funding sources to support new and innovative initiatives. Fourth, initiatives that support the County and town efforts to revitalize downtown areas for County residents. And the fifth would be some staff that's needed to sustain these undertakings. On Pages 20 and 21 of the BRO report, they highlight a number of those workforce development programs that are, again, responsive to local needs, expand partnerships, and linkages with local industries, and also increase outside funding sources.

Just three examples. The first is the HVACR Program, Heating, Ventilating, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Program, in partnership with the Oil Heat Institute of Long Island. As we approach three days of record•setting

temperatures, I think that alone underscores the need for this technically trained workforce here in our region. When we look at the industry•wide statistics, nationwide and locally, with 25% of that workforce retiring within the next five years, and already shortages in attracting newly skilled and new workers to that field, it just highlights the importance of it to our region, to the health and safety of our residents. And it's also a tremendous opportunity for students going forward, pursuing careers in high demand occupations. This was listed last January •• excuse me, the January before last by one of the major weekly magazines as one of the high growth industries and professions within the country.

The second is our mechatronics initiative in partnership with our Local Workforce Investment Boards, and not just the Suffolk Board, but the two Boards in Nassau, the Oyster Bay and the Hempstead Workforce Investment Boards, with multiple industry partners, the Long Island Forum for Technology, ADAPT, Hauppauge Industrial Association, the Long Island •• Long Island Association, and many, many individual manufacturing companies. As you know, it's a three•year, 2.4 million dollar initiative to provide advanced manufacturing skills training to incumbent workers and dislocated workers. As a matter of fact, today President Pippins signed an application to the Federal Government, the Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration for an additional grant in this high growth area within the country.

And the last is nursing partnerships. We've talked about it before, but I believe it deserves to be highlighted. We signed partnerships with seven hospitals within Suffolk County that will allow us to train an additional 90 registered nursing students each year for the next •• between four and six years. Some of the agreements are four years and some are six. But that will bring in excess of 4.5 million dollars in total to the College to help support faculty and staff to help us grow that initiative. It's a very costly endeavor.

We've also been able to secure outside funding, mostly with the County's help and with the State's help, funding to get the Sayville Center up and running, put new labs in, and make sure that it can accommodate the needs of those students.

Dr. Pippins mentioned efficiency initiatives. Starting in about three weeks, we are taking additional space at Sayville to allow us to take multiple lab sections and clinical sections and put them in one larger lecture room. And when we talk about large, we're not talking about 200 students in a room, as some of our bigger sister institutions in a lecture hall, we're talking about 40 to 50 students, but that allows us to save and provide efficiencies on faculty time within the program.

I touched on the downtown centers, and BRO also mentions the other downtown center, and that's the Culinary Center in Riverhead. That's something •• it's no longer proposed. The lease has been signed. The building will be under construction momentarily. The Riverhead Town Board should approve the site plan for that facility at their meeting tomorrow evening, and we hope to break ground right after Labor Day. All of these things support revitalization of downtown areas. They provide students with professional training for high growth, high demand career opportunities, and they expand access for students County•wide.

Overall, in terms of expanding outside revenue, BRO's analysis on Page 26 and 27 of their report highlights the fact that the College is doing an excellent job in this area. We surpass SUNY averages in terms of outside support and outside revenue, and we also •• we also go beyond many of the Community Colleges that are our peers within the State. So we think we're doing a good job in leveraging our resources and convincing outside entities that we are doing a good job and we are worthy of their investment in us and our students. But to sustain all those things that we're talking about and to

maintain the College's infrastructure, we need certain •• a certain number of positions to help •• to help do that.

I would just refer you to the picture on the front cover of BRO's report. We have to thank the County for their support for the renovation of Veterans Plaza, or Central Plaza as some call it, at the Ammerman Campus. It is virtually complete at this point, with the exception of a couple of elements. We would invite you to come and see it. It is magnificent, and it really brings that campus together. It provides a sense of place, a sense of being for students, which, when they return in the Fall, I'm sure they're going to be absolutely thrilled.

But in making that investment, in putting the County's dollars behind an improvement like this, we all know, whether it's in our own homes, whether it's in a factory, whether it's in an office building, or whether it's at a college, we need to maintain those capital improvements. If we don't, we're not good stewards, stewards of those capital investments. And so Dr. Pippins had mentioned a few positions that we need, one of which is a Custodial Worker. And she also mentioned the Professional Assistant and the Clerk Typist that we will need effective June of '07, because we will be opening the doors of the Culinary School the end of August of '07. We're not asking for a complete year salary for those positions, but we know that when we open those doors, we will need some additional staff to make that program a success, and to expand it to meet the needs of our hospitality and culinary industry, which is one of the mainstays of Suffolk County's economy.

So with that, let me just thank you again for the opportunity to provide input on the Operating •• on the recommended Operating Budget. Thank you.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Thank you very much, Mr. Gatta. As always, you are enlightening. Curious, and this is just simply because I just don't •• I'm learning myself on your budget processes, when these private dollars, Mr. Stein, when they come in • when they come in to •• say from the hospitals or almost any other private entity, are they earmarked for certain lines in the budget, or do they get placed into your General Fund? How does that work?

MR. STEIN:

The dollars from the hospitals are specifically tied to nursing faculty positions, and, in fact, those were included by the Executive in the recommended budget. Those faculty positions are supported by the outside dollars, so they were included.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Okay. And would that be the general case for any other private dollars that move into the •• move towards the College, they're usually earmarked or they •• or are they segregated into a certain line in the budget; is that how that works?

MR. STEIN:

Depending upon how the money came in. For example, some monies are provided specifically for equipment, instructional equipment for a particular program, so the dollars would, in fact, be included in the instructional equipment line for that particular program.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Okay. That's •• basically, I wanted to see how your budget works. Great. Any other things that you'd like to add to the conversation? No? Would anyone else like to be heard on this public hearing? All right. Then with that being the case, that this public hearing will be closed, and thank you very much. Again, the vote on the College budget amendments will take place on August 8th at the General Meeting here in Hauppauge.

MR. STEIN:

Thank you.

DR. PIPPINS:

Thank you.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Thank you very much.

MR. GATTA:

Thank you.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Enjoy your day. Keep cool.

[THE HEARING WAS ADJOURNED AT 1:47 P.M.]